United Nations A/65/PV.107

General Assembly
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Official Records

107th plenary meeting
Friday, 1 July 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 69 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Draft resolution (A/65/L.82)

The President (*spoke in French*): Members will recall that the Assembly considered agenda item 69 and its sub-items (a) to (d) at its 66th and 67th plenary meetings, on 15 December 2010.

I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.82.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): It is a great pleasure for me to co-introduce, together with the representatives of the Dominican Republic and the State of Qatar, draft resolution A/65/L.82, entitled "Improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response".

I would like to thank all Member States for their valuable contributions and flexibility during the negotiations. The text was significantly developed with the input we received from various delegations. Let me also express our special appreciation to those Member States that co-sponsored the draft resolution.

In recent years, there have been major disasters in different parts of the world, first in Pakistan, then in Haiti and most recently in Japan, just to mention a few. All these developments led us to take a fresh look at how to improve the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets to tackle natural disasters.

We are grateful to Qatar for launching the HOPEFOR initiative last year. In parallel with that initiative, Turkey has been working on how to better address this issue as well. His Excellency President Abdullah Gül placed specific emphasis on this matter in his statement at the general debate in September 2010 (see A/65/PV.11). At the same debate, His Excellency Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, made a similar appeal to all Member States (see A/65/PV.12).

As the endeavours of Turkey, Qatar and the Dominican Republic have coincided, we have decided to join our individual efforts and energies to bring this important issue to the agenda of the United Nations once again. It is our hope that this draft resolution and the activities that will follow will draw the utmost attention of all Member States.

Turkey has its own experience with the need to use military and civil defence assets. In the 1990s, we had two major earthquakes at the heart of our country, during which we lost thousands of our citizens. In the aftermath of those earthquakes, a significant role on the ground was played not only by civilian actors, but also by defence forces. Due to its familiarity with this matter and its first-hand experience, Turkey believes that an effective use and coordination of military and

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civil defence assets can make a real difference in responding to natural disasters.

We trust that the international conference to be held in Doha will set the stage for a comprehensive discussion of the use of military and civil defence assets by bringing together Member States, key United Nations officials and other relevant actors active in this field. We will continue to be engaged in this critical issue with our partners and bring the outcomes of the international conference to New York later this year.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.82.

Miss Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the co-authors of the draft resolution entitled "Improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response", I am pleased to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.82 to the General Assembly under sub-item (a) of agenda item 69, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

The frequency of natural disasters has increased in the past decade. This has led to the loss of millions of lives and to the displacement of millions of people. That trend is likely to accelerate over the next decade, with all of the negative implications that this will have on natural disaster response systems.

Over the past year, military assets were enhanced in order to strengthen international humanitarian efforts to address natural disasters around the world. It has been demonstrated that, in many cases, the use of military and civil defence assets has been effective in filling the gap between military resources and those necessary to address natural disasters. Guidelines have been established to determine best practices in using these assets. Measures were also adopted to improve the effectiveness of these resources.

Nevertheless, we must scale up our efforts today so as to improve the effectiveness of military and civil defence assets. This is why we must seek out improved methods to deal with natural disasters and discuss ways to better distribute military and civil defence assets in relief efforts.

This issue has received considerable attention. Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani, Prime Minister of the State of Qatar, launched the HOPEFOR initiative in June 2010 in order to discuss the use of military assets in relief operations and improve their effectiveness, while also guaranteeing respect for humanitarian principles in that regard. In recent months, the State of Qatar has been at the forefront of a number of far-reaching consultations to make the HOPEFOR initiative a reality. All stakeholders have participated in an effort to ensure the effective use of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In that connection, I would like once again to thank OCHA and express our deep appreciation to it for the technical assistance provided in the framework of the HOPEFOR initiative.

Last February, Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs wrote a letter (A/65/772) addressed to you, Mr. President, in which he spelled out the guidelines for the HOPEFOR initiative in the framework of international humanitarian assistance to improve military and civil defence assets. Efforts were also launched to improve natural disaster relief and response. In that regard, I would note the appeal launched by the Dominican Republic and Turkey.

Qatar is sparing no effort to bring together these endeavours in the framework of the HOPEFOR initiative in order to improve the effectiveness of military and civil defence assets in natural disaster relief response.

An agreement was concluded to hold an international conference in Doha in 2011 at which States and relevant Government and non-government stakeholders would discuss the HOPEFOR initiative and the options contained in the relevant documents, including ways to implement them in close cooperation with Member States and regional organizations, international organizations and the coordinating actors in emergency response.

The initiative underscores the importance of impartiality and neutrality in humanitarian assistance and highlights the civilian aspect of humanitarian assistance in natural disaster response where military assets are used to support humanitarian assistance. We also note that it is important to use these resources with the agreement of the States concerned and in line with international law, humanitarian law and all other relevant humanitarian principles.

The initiative highlights the guidelines for using civil defence and military assets in the framework of natural disaster relief operations. The project also notes

that coordination should be improved between civilian and military humanitarian assistance and should guarantee the necessary civil defence and military assets to support relief operations during natural disasters in an appropriate, effective and coordinated manner, in line with the principles mentioned in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution and, where necessary, in accordance with the Oslo Guidelines.

Interested States came together several times to discuss the content of this initiative. The observations, initiatives and ideas that were put forward during those consultations were taken into account in the discussions that resulted in draft resolution A/65/L.82.

Finally, my delegation would like to thank all the other delegations that participated in the consultations in an effective manner to produce this draft resolution, which we hope will be adopted in order to improve the humanitarian response to natural disasters and further this most noble cause.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Dominican Republic to introduce draft resolution A/65/L.82.

Mr. Montilla (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Dominican Republic would like to associate itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Turkey and Qatar in connection with draft resolution A/65/L.82, entitled "Improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response".

The adoption of this draft resolution today will undoubtedly constitute an important step in preparing for the international conference that will be held on this issue in Doha at the end of this year. We are certain that, with the adoption of the draft resolution, the issue of the use of military and civil defence assets in the case of natural disasters will be discussed more broadly, in a more inclusive manner and while taking into account the various stakeholders involved so as to improve the coordination and effectiveness of such assets, always with the ultimate goal in mind of saving as many lives as possible and preserving the critical structures of the country affected.

The Dominican Republic is a country which, due to its geographic situation, has traditionally been exposed to a wide range of natural disasters — and now more than ever, owing to the adverse effects of climate change. It is very important for us to study, along with countries in similar situations, the most viable options to react effectively and swiftly to a natural disaster and to determine how these efforts can support those of the United Nations humanitarian agencies.

It is for that reason that, on 23 September 2010, Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of the Dominican Republic, highlighted here in this Hall the need to strengthen national capacities for natural disaster preparedness and response through an alliance of at-risk States that would enable them to exchange experiences and lessons learned in order to apply them in the future (see A/65/PV.12). The various components of the HOPEFOR initiative respond precisely to the need that countries such as ours have to deepen the thinking on how to improve the effectiveness and coordination of humanitarian efforts in natural disasters.

We are sure that, with a commitment to the principles of humanitarian assistance that we have already agreed and a spirit of joint cooperation among civilian and military stakeholders, the HOPEFOR initiative could become the focus for relevant discussion vis-à-vis the international humanitarian agenda, as well as the vehicle through which we, the States Members of the United Nations, could take important steps in responding to increasingly frequent and destructive natural disasters.

I would like very much to thank our colleagues and friends from the State of Qatar and Turkey for all of their cooperation and dedication to this process. Allow me to conclude by urging members to become sponsors of the draft resolution before the Assembly, as well as to participate actively in the process of reflection we have begun.

The President (*spoke in French*): We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/65/L.82, entitled "Improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department of General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/65/L.82, the following countries have also

become sponsors of the draft resolution: Australia, Haiti, Indonesia, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Peru.

The President (*spoke in French*): We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/65/L.82?

Draft resolution A/65/L.82 was adopted (resolution 65/307).

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 69.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.